



opportunityreturns

Creating more jobs for today and tomorrow

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Rod R. Blagojevich – Governor

news

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GOV. BLAGOJEVICH ANNOUNCES \$150,000 IN *OPPORTUNITY RETURNS* FUNDING TO SUPPORT RECYCLING EFFORTS AND JOB CREATION IN BELLEVILLE AND HIGHLAND

CHICAGO – Gov. Rod Blagojevich today announced that **\$150,000** in *Opportunity Returns* funding has been awarded to the Southwest region communities of Highland and Belleville to support recycling initiatives that will help create at least four jobs and advance collection and processing efforts throughout the area. Highland Recycling in Madison County will receive a grant of **\$100,000** to expand its recycling processing capabilities by placing, free of charge, balers at various businesses and organizations in Madison County and the Southwestern Illinois area. Phoenix Recycling and Shredding in Belleville will use a **\$50,000** grant to expand its commercial recycling collection efforts by adding secure document shredding customers. The grants come as a part of *Opportunity Returns*, Gov. Blagojevich's regional, pro-active economic development program to create jobs and promote economic growth for the Southwest region.

“As we move full speed ahead with our efforts to stimulate the economy and create more jobs in the Southwest region, we cannot leave our environmental responsibilities behind. This *Opportunity Returns* recycling grant program is such a valuable asset to Illinois because it will expand recycling programs throughout the Southwest region that are beneficial to the environment and the local economy,” Gov. Blagojevich said.

The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) administers the recycling grants. Maximum grant awards are \$50,000 for a collection project and \$100,000 for a processing project that handles at least 7,000 tons of recyclable commodities annually. DCEO finances the program through monies received from the tipping fee surcharge levied at Illinois landfills.

“Gov. Blagojevich and I are both committed to growing our economy in a way that not only creates good jobs but helps protect our environment as well. *Opportunity Returns* will continue making these kinds of important investments that are making a difference throughout the regional economy,” State Rep. Thomas Holbrook (D-Belleville) said.

“We have been able to show businesses and organizations in the area how they can reduce operating costs by recycling and demand for our services has increased. This *Opportunity Returns* grant will help us meet that demand,” said Rick Frey, President of Highland Recycling.

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“This new venture might not be possible without this *Opportunity Returns* grant. Not only are we providing a valuable recycling service to businesses and organizations that generate confidential documents, we are also creating jobs for many of our sheltered workshop clients,” said Scott Rostance, Director of Operations for Phoenix Recycling and Shredding.

Grant awards are determined on a competitive basis, and the grantee is required to provide an applicant investment of at least 50 percent of the funding required for the project.

“Providing these grants to Highland and Belleville will increase the accessibility to recycling depots and participation in recycling programs in Madison and St. Clair County and beyond. Expanding recycling programs across the Southwest region means expanding markets for an industry that helps us be good stewards of our environment and give rise to countless new employment opportunities. This is an important investment in the future of Illinois,” DCEO Director Jack Lavin said.

The *Opportunity Returns* regional economic development plan is the most aggressive, comprehensive approach to creating jobs in Illinois’ history. Since a one-size-fits-all approach to economic development just doesn’t work, the Governor has divided the state into 10 regions – finding areas with common economic strengths and needs, and developing a plan with specific actions for each region. This grassroots effort is a product of significant outreach over several months with business, civic and labor leaders, and elected officials. *Opportunity Returns* contains tangible actions to make each region more accessible, more marketable, more entrepreneurial and more attractive to business.

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